



Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed

2450 S. Curry Street, Carson City, NV 89703

Tel:775-882-8600 Fax:775-882-7285

License #16114

www.greenhousegardencenter.com

Austrian Pine Fungus and Blue Spruce Pink Needle

Look – up in the sky! It's a bird, it's a plane... no it's a fungus and it's after all the pines. This fungus is most often seen in Austrian pines but may occur in Scotch, Bosnian, Vanderwolf, and White pines. The disease will attack the top of most pines, turn the leaders an unsightly brown color and will then progress down the sides of the tree. You may look up at the brown top and see new green growth emerging for several years, but the amount of growth will diminish each year. This in turn, will eventually cause the top and several feet of the pine tree to die leaving you with a mess and eventually a dead tree.

The fungus attacks the new growth in the spring, and becomes established, while the shoot and needles are elongating. Once this has occurred, the fungus kills off the needle and digs in preparing to attack new growth, or the candle, and next years' buds for the following year. To stop this cycle, you should conscientiously look at the tops of your pines monthly, in the spring and summer, to see if any discoloration is occurring.

You will/may need two different types of fungicide to successfully combat the disease. One should be a **contact** type, (i.e. Chlorothalonil (**Daconil**)), and the other should be a **systemic**, (i.e. Copper Sulphate Pentahydrate (**Phyton 27**)), or (Propiconazole (**Infuse**)). The addition of a sticker-spreader will also help to get the fungicide to adhere to the needles and do the work. Using the **contact fungicide first** followed by the systemic fungicide creates the best results. Spraying every week seems to help set a pattern for both you and the pine trees. Once your pine trees have had a fungus, the chance of reoccurrence is much greater. A single season's application is not sufficient to kill the fungus. You will have to repeat the program again the following 2 years if your pines are already infected, since needles hang on the tree for 3 years. Start spraying in mid-May.

There is another fungus which attacks blue spruce. This fungus is aptly named '**pink needle**'. The outer needles which make up the new growth are infected by this fungus which can attack anywhere, not exclusively the top leader of the blue spruce. On the north side of Carson City one year, we found an outbreak of 'pink needle'. Seemingly, only a patch or two of the trees were bothered. Subsequently, and as a result of the **traveling fungus**, huge patches of tree needles erupted into huge pink masses. The affected needles then fell off, leaving unsightly patches of dead-looking branches. (Spider mites are common on both pines and spruce causing the needles to yellow or pale, look and feel dirty, but do not cause the needles to fall off when touched or brushed against). Some of these big beautiful trees seemed to be completely dead. Several homeowners had the trees cut down and removed before finding out that \$60 worth of fungicide and a comprehensive spray program would have saved a thousand-dollar tree.

The spray products and spray treatment program are the same for 'pink needle fungus' as well as for the pine fungus. You may use the same two products to treat both diseases. You may find that one infected tree comes out and grows fungus before the others in your yard, so you may end up spraying four or five times to treat all of the new growth. There are no spruce species which seem to be resistant to these problems at this time.

As with most things, most plants don't die from the initial infection but later from a more troublesome problem. This holds true for the pine and spruce trees. **A tree weakened by fungal infection becomes more susceptible to further damage from diseases and insects.** Borers are the true culprit that kills the weakened tree, so an application of systemic insecticide specific for borers should be applied on an annual basis. As with any disease, plan to treat the patient, your tree, and not exclusively the disease. A diligent watchful eye prevents damage, spread, and expense.